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ABSTRACT

The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 (also know as Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) recognized that the educational needs of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students could not be met by traditional, English-only instruction. This legislation provided funding to state education agencies and local school districts to encourage development and implementation of bilingual education programs and has undergone revision in 1974, 1978, 1984, and is part of the Hawkins-Stafford Amendments of 1988 (PL 100-297). The purpose of this paper is to increase school social workers' knowledge about bilingual education and to generate ideas about how they can promote bilingual education for LEP students. Growing evidence in longitudinal studies supports the claim that early positive school learning experiences result in lower retention and dropout rates. Making use of the LEP students' home languages in initial contacts with school will increase their chances of having positive learning experiences. Success in school will enable LEP students to break the cycle of poverty and ease their entry into mainstream America. The paper presents: (1) an overview of the Hawkins-Stafford Amendments; (2) a case for bilingual education for Hispanic LEP children; (3) pro and con positions on bilingual education; (4) a synthesis of recent research findings; and (5) the role of school social workers in bilingual education. A list of 27 references is included. (ALL)

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Bilingual Education & the American Dream:

A Bridge or a Barrier?

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Bilingual Education and the American Dream:

A Bridge or a Barrier?

This manuscript title: "Bilingual Education and the American Dream: A Bridge or a Barrier? poses a question which merits consideration by school social workers, educators and civic leaders who share a human justice concern and a desire to promote educational opportunities for all children and in particular for children who commence school with a handicap because their home language is not English.

The Augustus F. Hawkins-Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988 to the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 (PL 100-297) represents renewed hope for children designated as Limited English Proficient (LEP). It also introduces a variety of opportunities for school social workers who wish to assume critical roles for improving the educational opportunities for educationally at risk children who present various handicaps such as language or economic circumstances. School social workers are uniquely qualified to fill both direct and indirect professional roles that are prescribed in the legislation. School social workers are trained to work with individuals, families and groups who represent the families and communities where these children reside. Social workers possess behavioral science knowledge and specialize in

identifying and developing community resources. Social workers are experts in assessing the impact of environmental stressors on individual and family functioning. School social workers are in a position to provide critical community resources that can be mobilized to enhance the family and student's functioning and increase the school's holding power of its pupils.

The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 also known as Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 represents a national recognition that the educational needs of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students could not be met effectively by traditional schooling using English as the only medium of instruction (Padilla, 1984). This landmark legislation has undergone subsequent revisions in 1974, 1978, 1984, and is part of the Hawkins-Stafford Amendments of 1988 ie. PL 100-297. This legislation has provided funding to State Education Agencies and local school districts to encourage the development and implementation of bilingual education programs designed to meet the particular needs of LEP students. The continued growth of these programs despite national Administration opposition, the variety of approaches and the lack of clarity about the goals of bilingual education, plus the dearth of research and inconclusive findings are all reasons why school social workers may well be as confused as the general public and question whether indeed " Bilingual Education serves as a bridge or a barrier to mainstream America" for children who start school as monolingual native non-English speakers.

The purpose of this paper is to increase school social workers' knowledge about bilingual education. It is hoped that this paper will provide answers to questions that prompt reservations about the merits of bilingual education for LEP students. It is hoped that this paper will generate ideas on how school social workers can play a role in promoting bilingual education for LEP students. The focus of this paper is contained in a question paraphrase of the title : Is bilingual bicultural education a vehicle or an obstacle for LEP children in their quest to a share of the American Dream"? It is the position of the author that if the school administration (system) supports the child's learning experience utilizing the principle of starting where the LEP learner is at, which means teaching the pupil to read and write in his/her native language, the school will increase its rapport with parents and holding power with this group of "at risk" students. If LEP students can make use of their home language in their initial contacts with school, this will increase the chances, that they will experience positive learning experiences as opposed to fear and cognitive dissonance experiences which undermine children's self concepts. There is growing evidence in longitudinal studies to support the claim that early positive school learning experiences result in fewer subsequent grade retention and drop-out rates (Curiel, et. al., 1986).

If LEP students are able to succeed in school their chances of breaking the cycle of poverty increases and their entry into

mainstream America is also more hopeful.

In this manuscript the author attempts to present an overview of the Hawkins-Stafford Title VII Amendments of 1988 which represent the current status and prescriptions for program alternatives in bilingual education. A case for bilingual education to meet the needs LEP children of Hispanic heritage is presented. A discussion that addresses the basis for the controversy that surrounds the question of bilingual education and a synthesis of recent research findings is also presented. The final part of the manuscript will discuss how the needs of LEP students can be viewed in the context of NASW's School Social Work Study: The Human Factor: A Key to Excellence in Education.

Purpose of Bilingual Education:

The enactment of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, commonly referred to as Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, began the federal government's direct involvement with bilingual education which was reauthorized in 1974, 1979, 1984, and in Section 7002 of PL 100-297 enacted in April 1988. The present statement of policy reads:

> Congress declares it to be the policy of the United States, in order to establish equal opportunity for children and to promote educational excellence (A) to encourage the establishment and operation, where appropriate, of educational programs using bilingual educational practices, techniques, and methods, (B) to encourage the establishment of special alternative instructional programs for students of limited English proficiency in school districts where the establishment of bilingual education programs is not practicable or for other appropriate reasons, and (C) for those purposes, to provide financial assistance to local educational agencies, and, for certain related purposes, to State educational agencies, institutions

> of higher education, and community organizations. The programs assisted under this title include programs in elementary and secondary schools as well as related preschool and adult programs which are designed to meet the educational needs of individuals of limited English proficiency, with particular attention to children having the greatest need for such programs. Such programs shall be designed to enable students to achieve full competence in English. Such programs may additionally provide for the development of student competence in a second language (PL 100-297, 1988).

The original Act specified eligibility criteria which restricted the use of Title VII funds to those school districts which had high concentration of: "Children from families (A) with incomes below $3,000 per year; or (B) were receiving payments under the public welfare program, "Aid to Families with Dependent Children" which was administered under a State plan approved under Title IV of the Social Security Act (U.S. Commission of Civil Rights, 1975). In 1974,1978, 1984, and 1988 the Bilingual Education Act was amended to incorporate recommendations based on program experience. The present legislation continues to require a means test i.e. LEP student's family income must be within poverty guidelines. The 1988 Amendments identify three categories of bilingual education programs that are eligible for funding. The "transitional bilingual education" program represents the bulk of funded projects by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA). In FY 1986, there were 519 awards serving 173,903 students. In FY 1987 there were 578 awards serving 204, 572. Many other programs are funded through local or state grants. The prescription for a transitional program is found in Section 7003 (4) (A) which

reads:

> The term "program of transitional bilingual education" means a program of instruction, designed for children of limited English-speaking proficiency in elementary or secondary schools, which provides, with respect to the years of study to which such a program is applicable, structured English language instruction, and to the extent necessary to allow a child to achieve competence in the English language, instruction in the child's language. Such instruction shall incorporate the cultural heritage of such children and of other children in American society. Such instruction shall, to the extent necessary, be in all courses or subjects of study which will allow a child to meet grade-promotion and graduation standards (PL 100-297, 1988).

The Hawkins-Stafford Amendments include for the first time language that limits the enrollment time of LEP students in bilingual programs. This is in response to criticism that some programs were found to retain students after they were English proficient. The law initially reflected the uncertainty in the field as to determining the appropriate length of enrollment. It was reported that a majority of programs were being operationalized as maintenance programs rather than transitional as prescribed by the law. The goal of a maintenance program is to achieve in the learner equal proficiency in the native and English language which would mean continuation of instruction in two languages throughout elementary and secondary grades. The enrollment in bilingual programs in the revised Act is limited to three years and a maximum of five years if the student is judged by formal evaluation to require more than the three year enrollment period.

The Hawkins-Stafford Amendments of 1988, like the 1984 Amendments emphasize the participation of children from low income families and allow for the participation of children whose

dominant language is English. The second category of programs is designed to combine the participation of LEP students and English dominant students with an implicit goal to achieve dual proficiency for both sets of students. The "developmental bilingual education" category represents a limited number of programs as indicated by the number of grants awarded by the Office of Bilingual Education, two grants were awarded in FY 1986 and two in FY 1987 (Bennett, 1988). The prescription for this category of programs is found in Section 7003 (5) (A) and reads:

> The term "program of developmental bilingual education" means a full-time program of instruction in elementary and secondary schools which provides, with respect to the years of study to which such a program is applicable, structured English-language instruction and instruction in a second language. Such programs shall be designed to help children achieve competence in English and a second language, while mastering subject matter skills. Such instruction shall, to the extent necessary, be in all courses or subjects of study which will allow a child to meet grade promotion and graduation standards.
> (B) Where possible, classes in programs of developmental bilingual education shall be comprised of approximately equal number of students whose native language is English and limited English proficient students whose native language is the second language of instruction and study in the program (Ibid., 1988).

The rationale for inclusion of English proficient students is two-fold: One, there is concern about the continued segregation of many groups of limited English proficient students and two, it is believed that both limited English proficient children and English proficient students can benefit from exposure to each other in the context of bilingual education and that such programs help develop our national linguistic resources (InterAmerican Research Associates, 1984).

The 1988 Amendments include the "Special Information Rule" which requires that parents of children that are candidates for bilingual instruction be given reasons for recommended placement and options of other programs if they decline the placement recommendation.

The third program category which is prescribed in PL 100-297, Section 7003 (6) is not a bilingual program but an option in cases where the school district has experienced past or current problems in implementing a program because of staff limitations or limited number of LEP students with a common native language. This type of program is labeled 'Special Alternative program.' Thirty-five continuation awards were made in FY 1986, serving 9,864 students. In FY 1987 forty-six grant awards were issued serving 12,380 students, thirty-four were continuation grants (Bennett, 1988). The program is described as follows:

> The term 'special alternative instructional programs' means programs of instruction designed for children of limited English proficiency in elementary and secondary schools. Such programs are not transitional or developmental bilingual programs, but have specially designed curricula and are appropriate for the particular linguistic and instructional needs of children enrolled. Such programs shall provide, with respect to the years of study to which such programs are applicable, structured English language instruction and special instructional services which will allow a child to achieve competence in the English language to meet grade-promotion and graduation standards (PL 100-298,1988).

The Hawkins-Stafford Amendments of 1988 extend the Bilingual Education Act, PL 100-297 legislation until October 1, 1993. The Amendments introduce for the first time language which limits enrollment in bilingual programs to three years and a maximum of

five years in cases where formal evaluation indicates the need for continued enrollment. It is important to note that the 1988 revisions continue to deemphasize native language instruction. The increase in number of awards for 'special alternative' programs and the introduction of limits on enrollment time can be viewed as efforts to undermine native language instruction. The time limits were introduced in reaction to reports that the majority of programs were keeping LEP students in bilingual classes longer than necessary. The early programs had few guidelines and limited experience in determining appropriate length of enrollment.

There are some instructional approaches such as English as a Second Language (ESL), High Intensity Language Training (HILT), Sheltered English, and Structured Immersion that use English only (Bennett, 1988). ESL instruction is a required component of all bilingual education programs in the U.S. School districts serving heterogeneous linguistic populations may elect to offer only ESL instruction if not enough children of the same first language background are enrolled to make bilingual instruction practical (National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1988). The teaching of English as a second language is based on the principles and methodology of foreign language teaching.
A prerequisite for this methodology is that the learner be literate in the first language.
There is little disagreement that learning English is essential to economic and social advancement in this society. The main

controversy centers on how to teach non-English-speaking children in a manner so that they do not fall so far behind in subject matter instruction that they become discouraged and develop negative attitudes about school, the process of learning and how this impacts on their feelings of self worth.

Case of Hispanic LEP Children:

Educators have known for many years that Hispanic children have difficulty succeeding in schools where all instruction is presented in English. As early as 1930 it was documented that, in Texas, overageness and drop-out rates were higher for Hispanic children of Mexican heritage when compared to either Black or majority American children and that most Mexican-American children never progressed beyond the third grade (Manuel, 1930). In 1986, there is still evidence that Hispanic children continue to exit schools early. Data collected by the U.S. Department of Commerce (1988) indicates that in 1986, only 55 percent of Hispanic youth compared to 65 percent Black and 77 percent White completed high school.

The National Advisory and Coordinating Council on Bilingual Education in its Twelfth Annual Report (1988) indicates that 12.5 percent of the student population nationwide are from language minority groups. The general rate of limited English proficiency in the non-English language population, which includes over 100 unique language groups is in the range of 40-53 percent. Furthermore, the Council Report indicates that approximately 75 percent of Hispanic children are LEP and the

majority have to contend with other social and economic disadvantages.

Limited English proficient children are found in every state. Fourteen states have over 50,000 LEP students each, while six (Texas, California, New York, Florida, Illinois and New Jersey) have more than 200,000 each. These estimates include children who speak only English at home but whose parents and other household members speak a language other than English. By the year 2000 the non-English language background population in the United States is projected to increase from the 1976 base year measurement of 28 million to 39.5 million (Fradd, 1985).

While many observations noted are applicable to all minority language children, the focus of this paper is on Hispanic children given the proportionately large enrollment in bilingual programs and estimates of need (National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1984).

Pro and Con Positions on Bilingual Education:

The pedagogical issues concerning native language instruction are still vigorously debated twenty years after the passage of Title VII. Proponents contend that instruction in the student's native language supports linguistic and cognitive development and results in high levels of academic achievement in the second language. Opponents argue that instruction in the student's native language retards or altogether precludes the learning of English and results in cognitive confusion (Tinajero, 1986).

A major thrust of the English-Only movement involves a vigorous attack on bilingual education. Proponents view bilingual education as an extension of civil rights and as a vehicle to assist LEP children to more readily learn English. Critics view bilingual education as a means to undermine the basic values of American society by language minority groups, particularly Hispanics. They view the programs as regressive, expensive, impractical where you have large number of different language groups and not in keeping with what is perceived as the traditional function of the schools, to promote the assimilation of minority groups into the fabric of American society.

In the last decade, there has been growing research evidence that supports the educational value of native language literacy instruction. It has been found that instruction in the student's native language simultaneously promotes the development of literacy skills in both the native language and a second language. Studies by Modiano (1966) in Mexico, Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomma (1976) in Sweden, Zappert and Cruz's (1977) analysis of studies in the U.S., and Downing's (1984) study in New Guinea reported on successful outcomes for programs that utilized the native language as the initial medium for teaching literacy. In each case, the investigators concluded that learning to read in the native language was beneficial because students transferred many of the skills and strategies in learning the first language to the second language. Cummins (1979,1980,1981) accounts for this supportive role of the native language in

learning to read a second language by postulating a common underlying relationship and interdependence among the reading skills across languages. Studies by Rosier and Farella (1976), Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976), and Cummins (1981) have supported this developmental interdependence hypothesis. In each case it was found that "previous learning of literacy-related functions in the first language predicted future learning of those functions in the second language" (Cummins, 1981).

Those opposed to bilingual education often bolster their opposition by pointing to a widely publicized study conducted by the American Institutes of Research (AIR) (1974). The AIR study assessed the impact of federally funded bilingual education programs and found that the participants' academic achievement gains in reading and mathematics were not significantly different from the gains made by similar students who did not participate in bilingual programs. It was thus concluded that the bilingual programs were ineffective.

A number of researchers have questioned the validity of the AIR findings. Cardenas (1977), for example, notes that the pre-to-post-test interval of five months for 50 percent of the projects evaluated was too short to ascertain any meaningful achievement gains for participants. In addition, Gray (1977) points out that the approaches to bilingual education varied widely among the programs evaluated and that the short pre-to-post-test interval precluded assessment of incremental changes that might be expected to occur over a longer period of time.

Arias and Navarro (1981) point out that the AIR evaluation was conducted at a time when the curriculum for bilingual education was in the evolving stage. Other researchers have pointed out the problems with the sample, the failure to control for socio-economic status (SES) differences between participants and non-participants.

A number of longitudinal studies have appeared recently Powers & Rossman M. H., 1984; Willig, 1985) which indicate that bilingual education programs have achieved positive long-term results for LEP students who were enrolled in elementary grades. For example, Willig (1985), in a meta-analysis of selected studies comparing participants and non-participants in bilingual programs found small to moderate positive differences were attained by the bilingual program participants on selected standardized academic achievements tests, as well as on some attitudinal measures.

While most studies examining the effectiveness of bilingual education have tended to address cognitive gains in reading and math skills, a ten year longitudinal study conducted by Curiel, et. al. (1986) examined the effects of bilingual education in early grades on the rates of grade retention and school drop-out. The study compared 86 participants with a control group of 90 non-participants. The findings revealed that students with longer exposure to bilingual education were more apt to stay in school, were less likely to be retained and achieved higher letter grades.

The majority of studies reported here indicate positive gains for bilingual education participants. There is research that reports contradictory findings. The variety and discontinuity of bilingual education programs, plus the lack of appropriate evaluation techniques and materials makes interpretation of findings problematic. Defusing the controversy around bilingual education will require continued research and concrete analysis of the effectiveness of alternative teaching models to support or refute theoretical and emotional posturing (Foster, 1982).

Role of School Social Workers in Bilingual Education:

Student population characteristics vary from school to school. The school administration, the community and existing social conditions frequently dictate priorities for the school social worker. Regardless of differences found in school populations, the school social worker endeavors to aid the school in its attempts to give attention to pupils' individual intellectual, social, and emotional needs and to offer each pupil an opportunity for success and achievement (Costin, 1977). In the context of bilingual education, the school social worker works to enhance services for LEP children and their families. The bilingual education program is seen as serving both a primary and a secondary prevention function. It serves a primary prevention function by facilitating the movement of the student through the school system. It serves in a secondary prevention function by addressing the cognitive and affective needs of the limited

English proficient minority student.

A survey of school social workers, principals, teachers, parents and various other officials in thirty states conducted by NASW School Social Work (1985) resulted in a report titled: The Human Factor: A Key to Excellence in Education. The Report suggests that schools need to broaden the conceptual and practical approach to improving education by stressing the school-environmental relationship. School social workers are well qualified to help schools examine how they can strengthen their relationship with their respective communities. The 'Special Information Rule' in PL 100-297 provides a vehicle for school social workers to serve in the role of mediator between the family and the school. Schools must be concerned with education of the whole child - being aware of both the strengths and needs each child brings in terms of intellectual, family, social and interpersonal realities (Mintzies & Hare, 1985). School social workers are in a position to promote school practices that call attention to the lack of resources to meet the needs of special "at risk" students. The NASW Report identifies five significant student/personal barriers to excellence or success in school. The barriers include: (1) low self esteem (2) problems with parents or other family members (3) truancy-high absenteeism (4) under achievement and (5) acting-out behavior.

Again, bilingual education can serve as a resource for school social workers to help meet the need of LEP students who suffer from low self-esteem and are likely candidates for under

achievement and truancy in the absence of a program that fails to acknowledge the principle of starting from a point of strength, ie build on the student's speaking knowledge.

This paper has reviewed the pro and con arguments on the merits of bilingual education. An overview of the Hawkins-Stafford Title VII Amendments of 1988 was presented. Possible roles for school social workers were discussed. The conclusion by the author is that Bilingual education has been shown to serve as a "bridge" to learning English and shows promise to serve as a means to increase the school's holding power of its students.

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